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ABSTRACT

A way in which second language teachers can use analysis of student discourse to understand how small group interaction defines students' roles relative to each other is demonstrated in a case study. The study compared the participant role of a 21-year-old Japanese male student in an intensive English second language program in two different student pairs. In one pair, the subject did not participate fully, showed frustration, and allowed the other participant to determine the dynamics of the interaction. In the second pair, the subject negotiated turn-taking with his partner and began to perceive himself as a legitimate participant in the classroom culture. It is concluded that the interaction between students can either limit or enhance students' opportunities to participate and negotiate meaning, and the teacher is in a position to intervene to change the limiting organization of the pair or group. In addition, it is proposed that when the teacher can identify strategies that students are using to successfully negotiate meaning, she or he can help all students develop such strategies by making them explicit. (MSE)

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The importance of participant role in cooperative learning

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This paper demonstrates a way that language teachers can use discourse analysis to understand how small group interaction defines students' participant roles relative to each other, and illustrates how the interaction can either limit or enhance students' opportunities to participate and negotiate meaning. Equipped with this understanding, the teacher can intervene to change limiting organizations. In addition, the teacher can encourage the students' development of useful strategies by making them explicit.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate a way that language teachers can use discourse analysis to understand the dynamics within cooperative learning groups and their effect on students' opportunities to participate. The analysis I present compares the participant role of one 21 year old Japanese male student in two different pairs to illustrate his change from non-participant to participant in a low-intermediate conversation class.

My discourse analysis incorporates insights and methodologies from speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, ethnography of communication, and social psychology, and requires conceptualizing the class as an emergent, dynamic culture in which the management of participation by teachers and students is a negotiated process. I emphasize the dual functions of language. The first function is obvious: language communicates information. The second function of language is less obvious, but perhaps more important: language defines the social situation. Of specific relevance to my discussion is the power of language to shape participant roles within the classroom culture.

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As teacher, I have the privileged position to be both participant and observer, or ethnographer, of the classroom culture that my students and I jointly create. For example, when the students are organized in cooperative learning groups, part of my job as facilitator is to observe and understand the norms of interaction that the students negotiate so that I can encourage the students' development of strategies beneficial to their English language acquisition. My ethnographic understanding provides an explanation for the patterns I identify through discourse analysis of their small group interaction. This information, further supported by student interpretations of their own interaction, enables me to answer the question, "What's going on here and why?"

Role of Small Groups

As teachers, we are concerned with the effects of our classroom organization on our students' opportunities and abilities to participate, especially when the goal is to develop conversational competence. It becomes particularly challenging to create a classroom culture in which all students participate more or less equally, given large numbers of students, culturally diverse backgrounds, distinct learning styles, and various affective responses to the ESL classroom experience in specific and to speaking English in general. Small group cooperative learning organizations have been shown to offer students increased opportunities to participate.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research considers small groups a means of increasing student opportunity to negotiate meaning. For example, Pica and Doughty (1986) demonstrate how small groups of students working on tasks in which there is an information gap provides increased opportunities for students to modify input. Long (1983) argues that modification of input makes the input comprehensible to the learner–a necessary condition for second language acquisition. While this research illustrates the increased opportunity for small groups of students to use language to communicate information, it does not address the second function of language—that of defining the social situation. In particular, how do students negotiate their participant roles within the small group interaction?

In her ethnography of communication, *The Invisible Culture*, Philips (1983) demonstrates how the teacher's ratification process and her organization of classroom activities into various participant structures or groupings define the Anglo students as participants and the Warm Springs Indian children as non-participants in the classroom discourse. She relates the Warm Springs Indian children's micro-level roles in the classroom discourse to their macro-level non-participant position in, first, educational and, later, occupational discourse. My ethnographic research in a

"successful" developmental bilingual public elementary school discusses the role of cooperative learning in promoting multicultural interaction in which students are defined as more or less equal participants regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Freeman, forthcoming).

In sum, SLA research emphasizes the role of small groups in increasing opportunity to transfer information and negotiate meaning, and ethnography of communication research emphasizes the role of small groups in defining students as more or less equal participants despite sociocultural differences (see Olsen & Kagan, 1992 for further discussion). But what happens when a student still does not participate, even in pair work, and the ongoing classroom experience seems to confirm his status as a non-participant in the classroom discourse? Hitoshi, a 21-year-old Japanese male with an apparently high level of language anxiety, seemed to participate less and less as the semester progressed, regardless of the groupings or activities I organized. Based on my comparative analysis of Hitoshi's initially unsuccessful and subsequently successful paired interaction, I argue that it is important for teachers to understand how small group interaction defines students relative to each other, and how the students' adopted roles limit or enhance their second language acquisition.

Interdisciplinary Discourse Analytic Approach

As I was analyzing the interaction of two dyads in which Hitoshi participated, I observed how the discourse strategies (e.g., prosody, repetition, questioning, interruption/overlap, pausing) that Hitoshi's two partners used functioned together to shape Hitoshi's participant role very differently from one interaction to the next. My analysis was informed by contributions from speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, work on participation framework, and Soviet Psychology, which I review in turn below.

Speech Act Theory

I borrow the basic premise of speech act theory: that people use language not only to describe the world, but to change it by relying on public, shared conventions (Austin, 1975). Consistent with the notion of speech act analyzed by ethnographers of communication yet distinct from the notion of speech act commonly analyzed by linguists, I take the position that interpretation of speech acts depends on features of context and interaction.

But how does language uttered by speakers and interpreted by hearers in context perform action? More specifically, how do the discourse strategies that Hitoshi's partners use function together to shape Hitoshi's participant role relative to theirs in the interaction? The research discussed below provides insights into how to answer these questions.

Interactional Sociolinguistics

According to Gumperz and Hymes (1972) and Gumperz (1982), conversational involvement, or an observable state of being in coordinated interaction, is the basis of all linguistic strategies. Without involvement, there is no shared meaning. Gumperz and Hymes (1972) and Gumperz (1982) demonstrate how prosody functions to achieve coherence in spoken discourse as well as interpersonal involvement. Of particular interest to my analysis is the function of rising intonation.

Tannen (1986; 1989) also investigates linguistic strategies that achieve interpersonal involvement, but her emphasis is on the joint construction of meaning by conversational partners. She argues that the more work hearers do to supply meaning, the deeper their understanding and the greater their sense of involvement with both the text and the speaker. For example, her work illustrates how repetition facilitates production and comprehension of language, connects speakers to the discourse and to each other, and helps accomplish the social goal of managing the business of conversation. She argues that these functions of repetition simultaneously provide an overarching function of coherence and interpersonal involvement. In her work on conversational style, Tannen (1986) demonstrates that interruption is not necessarily negative and that overlap often shows involvement.

Research in interactional sociolinguistics illustrates how interpersonal involvement is accomplished through interlocutors' use of prosody (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Gumperz, 1982), repetition (Tannen, 1986; 1989), and overlap (Tannen, 1986). Conversely, I argue that the absence of these discourse strategies demonstrates a lack of involvement which can contribute to an interlocutor's sense of being a non-participant in the interaction.

Ethnomethodology/Conversation Analysis

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) and Schegloff (1982; 1988) argue that conversation is an interactional achievement. They demonstrate how the turn-taking mechanism functions, for example in the role of pauses in allocating the next turn, and the supportive interactional work provided by back channel cues such as "uhhuh" and

"Oh really?" Their micro-level analysis illustrates the orderly nature of conversation, which they describe in terms of adjacency pairs (e.g., Question:Answer) and preference relations. For example, since the preferred response to a question is an answer, participants can expect an answer when they interpret a question in the on-going conversation. A speaker's use of the less preferred response (e.g., another question) would be evaluative.

While Fishman (1978) also assumes that conversation is an interactional achievement, she argues that the conversational work is not equally distributed by men and women. She illustrates the supportive conversational role that women assume through, for example, their use of questioning and back channel cues, and the dominating conversational role that men assume through, for example, their topic shifting and interruption. Although her work has been criticized for overgeneralizing based on a limited sample, it initiated a tremendous interest among feminist researchers in how within conversation power relations are reflected, either perpetuated or challenged, and (potentially) transformed. The notion of conversational distribution of power relations and resulting role definitions is relevant to my analysis.

Participation Framework/Floor Distribution

Philips' ethnography of communication in schools (1983) builds on Goffman's (1981) notion of participation framework, or the relation of all the participants in the interaction to the utterance. Following Goffman's (1981) notion of ratified vs. unratified speakers and listeners in an interaction, Philips' (1983) demonstrates that if students' utterances are not ratified by the teacher over time, the students are defined as non-participants in the interaction. The same argument applies to participants in any interaction; if their conversational contributions are not ratified by the other interlocutors, they are defined as non-participants.

This brings us to the notion of floor distribution–which refers to who talks when, where, and how much (Edelsky, 1981; Philips, 1983). Edelsky's analysis of mixed-sex university committee meetings (1981) and Philips' classroom ethnography (1983) demonstrate how the distribution of speaking time and the way turns are allocated reveal power relations among participants in the interaction, contributing to the definition of participant role.

Activity Theory

Soviet Psychology Activity Theory (see Wertsch, 1985 for further discussion) assumes that individuals learn how to participate in activities by participating in them

with more experienced members of the culture. As with the research discussed above, the emphasis is on interaction. Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) provides a means of understanding the interactional work that students do for each other in small groups, and is defined as, "the distance between a child's '*actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving*' and the higher level of '*potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*'" (1978:86, cited in Wertsch, 1985:67-68). As one student assumes the role of a more capable peer, she/he helps the other participate appropriately in the activity, which leads to the less capable peer's socialization through language to use language appropriately.

This brief interdisciplinary survey provides an understanding of conversation jointly constructed between interlocutors. Success depends on participants' demonstrating involvement with each other and with the meaning they are negotiating together. In other words, conversation is an interactional achievement. Similarly, learning in general, and second language acquisition in particular, is an interactional achievement.

Some of the literature cited above describes the interactional work that particular discourse strategies do in contributing to participants' ability to negotiate meaning, and therefore to their successful conversation. Other literature demonstrates how participants' differential use of discourse strategies can lead to asymmetrical definitions of participant role in the interaction. As the discourse analysis, below, illustrates, unequal role relationships can block students' opportunities to negotiate meaning. Since second language acquisition depends on opportunities for learner to negotiate meaning, it is important for teachers to understand students' roles relative to each other. Equipped with this understanding, the teacher can intervene to change limiting organizations. In addition, the teacher can encourage the students' development of strategies that are successful by making them explicit.

Identification of the Problem

During the summer of 1991, I was teaching in an intensive English program at a private college in Baltimore, MD. My low-intermediate conversation class consisted of 18 university age students from around the world, with a minimum of six years of English instruction in their native countries but little to no experience speaking English. During whole class discussions, six or seven of the students tended to monopolize the floor. In small groups of three to five, most of the students regularly participated in

animated discussions, but Hitoshi would never participate in any of these groupings. I organized the students into pairs, assuming dyads would provide all of the students, and especially Hitoshi, the opportunity to participate.

The excerpts that I present here come from one part in an on-going lesson plan. For this part, I gave each student in the dyad a different set of interview questions from *Face to Face: A Cross-Cultural Workbook* (Zanger, 1985) about the same general topic. The students taped their paired interviews in the language lab and gave me the tapes.

At first, I paired Hitoshi with Ali Reza, an outgoing Iranian who is friendly with everyone, assuming that this would create an opportunity for Hitoshi to talk. They finished well before the other students who were all still actively engaged in their interviews. Hitoshi and Ali Reza were quiet, which was rare for Ali Reza. When I approached them to ask how the interview was, Ali Reza said that they had finished, and Hitoshi, who had been looking down and slouching as Ali Reza talked to me, looked at me and said quietly, "I can't."

Although Ali Reza said they had finished, I interpreted Hitoshi's utterance and his body language as frustration at his perceived inability to speak sufficient English to successfully conduct the interview with Ali Reza. I want to emphasize that I do not mean that Hitoshi could not speak English. Instead, I think that he *perceived himself* as unable to speak English because of his interactional experience in the classroom. The point is that Hitoshi's seeing himself as someone who could not speak English, and therefore not a legitimate participant in the interaction, contributed to his inability to speak English, making negotiation of meaning and further second language acquisition impossible. Alternatively stated, in order to negotiate meaning in English, Hitoshi needed the opportunity to see himself as a legitimate participant in the classroom interaction, one who could in fact speak enough English to negotiate meaning with his partner.

My interpretation of Hitoshi's frustration led me to analyze the discourse of Hitoshi and Ali Reza's interaction. Based on my findings that Hitoshi was taking on the role of non-participant even in pair-work, I decided to regroup the students.

For the next interview, I paired Hitoshi with Myung Mi, a 23 year old Korean female. Their interview lasted longer than any of the other students' that day; the two of them seemed to be actively involved with each other. In this case, Hitoshi seemed to see himself as someone who could speak English and negotiate meaning. Because it was obvious that whatever they were doing was working, I decided to analyze the

discourse of that interaction to see what had happened to change Hitoshi's participant role.

Analysis

In this section, I present excerpts from Hitoshi and Ali Reza's unsuccessful interaction, and then compare it to Hitoshi and Myung Mi's successful interaction to illustrate how Hitoshi's participant role was defined in very different ways. I argue that Hitoshi and Myung Mi's interview provided Hitoshi with his first opportunity to see himself as a legitimate participant in our conversation class, which contributed to his changed participant role from that point on in the semester in whatever grouping I organized.

Transcription Key

Participants		Right Margin notes	
HIT:	Hitoshi	**Q-HIT**	Question Hitoshi asked
ALI:	Ali Reza	**A-ALI**	Answer Ali Reza gave
MYU:	Myung Mi		
?	rising intonation (not a syntactic question)		
..	pause	PAUSE	relatively long pause
BOLD TYPE	S-2's contribution	**[**	overlap/interruption during S-1's turn
_____			
_____	turn transition		
_____			

arrows indicate a line discussed in the text

Excerpt 1, between Hitoshi and Ali Reza, illustrates how their interaction defined Hitoshi as a non-participant. At the beginning of the interview, which is not included here, Ali Reza had told Hitoshi to ask his questions first, setting up their turn-taking mechanism with no negotiation. Hitoshi read his questions and Ali Reza answered. They demonstrated little conversational involvement in each others' contributions, and Ali Reza alone determined which questions he would answer.

Ali Reza's response from lines 4-23 is representative of the other turns throughout the interview. As the lack of bold face print makes immediately obvious,

Hitoshi was not at all involved in Ali Reza's talk. There was no repetition, no joint construction of meaning, no response at all from Hitoshi. Ali Reza's use of rising intonation in line 5, "she does not have a job when I was growing?" line 10, "uh she was teaching?" and line 12, "uh she she's eh a tai? tailor?" could be interpreted as requests for supportive back channel cues to show listenership, or in the case of line

Excerpt 1: Hitoshi/ Ali Reza Interview: Male/Female Roles
1 HIT: Did your mother have a job while you were growing up?
2 Did most women your mother's age work?
3 Why or why not
4 ALI: mmm my uh uh
5 my mother doesn't have a job when uh I was growing?
6 I mean eh
7 she has a job
8 she had a job
9 but uh inside the uh home
10 uh she was teaching?
11 uh she was teaching
12 uh she she's eh a tai? tailor?
13 I don't know what's exactly the pronunciation
14 maybe you know I made a mistake?
15 ..eh somebody who sew? ..and uh
16 she uh ..she teached to people
17 now you can sew on
18 uh yes.. sew
19 uh but inside the house
20 uh she has.. she has a special..uh a special eh.. student
21 uh I mean just it was a private school
22 private not public school
23 ok
24 HIT: ok
25 When working women have babies
26 do they get paid ma?.. maternity leave?
27 How much time do they usually take off from work
28 after baby is born
29 Is there such a thing as pa.. paternity leave?
30 ALI: uh ok
31 At what age do
32 in your country
33 do they usually start dating
34 HIT: al almost people start date?
35 dating?..uh
36 15 or 14, 15, 16?
37 ALI: 14,15,16?
38 HIT: Some
39 some people more more early age
40 but almost people
41 almost young people start dating 14
42 ALI: What do you think
43 you..you don't think it's very soon for young people?
44 HIT: uuuhhh...
45 ALI: who have go around 16, 15, 14?
46 (PAUSE)
47 is it not very soon for that people?
48 oh forget it
49 next.. next question
50 uh
Q-HIT
A-ALI
Q-HIT
A-Ø
Q-ALI
A-HIT

14, "maybe you know I made a mistake?" almost a direct invitation for Hitoshi to confirm his contribution or correct his mistake. Hitoshi did not respond. Ali Reza did all of the interactional work himself. He signaled the end of his turn with the discourse marker, "ok," in line 23. Hitoshi, in line 24, ratified the end of Ali Reza's turn and proceeded to the next question.

After Hitoshi finished the question in line 29, Ali Reza provided no answer. Perhaps he did not know what maternity or paternity leave meant, but he did not ask Hitoshi to help him with the meaning, perhaps he did not think the question was worth answering. However, after a question, especially in an interview situation (where the interviewer is in a more powerful position) a response or an explanation for non-response is expected. In this case, one would have expected an explanation for Ali Reza's lack of response, especially given the class assignment format.

With line 30, "uh Ok," Ali Reza took the floor and began his questioning. Hitoshi said nothing about Ali Reza's avoidance of his question and answered Ali Reza's question. In line 37, Ali Reza repeated Hitoshi's utterance, "14, 15, 16?" with rising intonation, which functioned as ratification of his listenership, and as a request for more information. This question and the question in lines 42-43,

> What do you think
> you...you don't think it's very soon for young people?

demonstrate that Ali Reza was beginning to get involved in the conversation with Hitoshi. Ali Reza requested Hitoshi's opinion concerning a custom in Japan which is very different from customs in Iran. Based on my observations and discourse analysis of other group interactions, I recognize this as the kind of question that normally would elicit student talk. The students are the experts and they are generally very interested in learning from each other. Hitoshi paused in line 44, "uuuh." Ali Reza seemed to interpret this as a request for clarification so, in line 45, Ali Reza expanded his question, repeating what Hitoshi had said. There was a long pause which clearly signaled it was Hitoshi's turn. Ali Reza repeated his slightly modified question in line 47, "is it not very soon for that young people," but in line 48, "oh forget it, next question." Ali Reza's utterance positioned Hitoshi as unable to respond to the question. Given Hitoshi's inability to provide more information (real or simply perceived by Ali Reza), joint construction of meaning was futile . Ali Reza made no further attempts at conversational involvement; instead he proceeded to the next question.

The second excerpt from Hitoshi and Ali Reza's interview follows. This excerpt illustrates the dynamic that had been established by the end of Hitoshi and Ali Reza's interview and provides a basis for comparison with Hitoshi and Myung Mi's interaction. It is obvious that Hitoshi's turns were very short, with little response by Ali Reza. None of the questions led to conversations in which they got involved with each other and

jointly constructed meaning. They were simply getting the job done. Ali Reza's only contribution in the first question came in line 82 where he repeated Hitoshi's utterance "before marriage." This ratified Ali Reza's understanding and marked the end of that question. Hitoshi's response to Ali Reza's next question was no longer. This time Ali Reza made two contributions. In line 91, "in your country?" Ali Reza requested clarification. Hitoshi responded, "no." Ali Reza did not seem to understand what this "no" meant, so he rephrased the question in line 93, "they have to get permission from their parents." Hitoshi provided the minimal response, "uhhum."

The last question that Ali Reza asked was only the sixth question out of eleven on his interview. In line 95 Ali Reza said, "ok that's good" and turned off their tape. He did not ask Hitoshi the rest of the questions; Ali Reza took total control of how and when the interview would end.

Excerpt 2: Hitoshi/ Ali Reza (Later in same interview)

```
72    ALI: ok                                                          ┐
73         is it common for a man and woman                            │
74         who eh are not married                                      │
75         to live together                                            │ Q-ALI
76         is it accepted in your country                              │
77    HIT: No no we uh                                                 ┘
78         no some some people uh                                      ┐
79         do together uh                                              │
80         some people to live together                                │ A-HIT
81         uh  before marriage                                         │
82 --> ALI: before marriage                                            ┘
83         OK                                                          ┐
84         When a man and woman want to get married                    │
85         do they usually ask their parents or tell them              │
86         Is it a problem if a son or daughter                        │ Q-ALI
87         wants to marry                                              │
88         somone outside his or her religion, race or ethnic group    ┘
89    HIT: uhhum                                                       ┐
90         almost parents said no                                      │
91 --> ALI: in your country?                                           │ A-HIT
92    HIT: no                                                          │
93 --> ALI: they have to get permission from their parents?            │
94    HIT: uhhum                                                       ┘
95 --> ALI: Ok  that's good (turned off tape)
```

To summarize the dynamics of Hitoshi and Ali Reza's pair work: Ali Reza determined the turn-taking mechanism, with Hitoshi asking all of his questions and then Ali Reza asking his. Ali Reza even determined which questions he would answer and how many questions he would ask with no negotiation of this decision. Hitoshi contributed nothing to Ali Reza's turns, even when invited in by Ali Reza's use of rising intonation. Hitoshi's turns were short, and Ali Reza's original attempts to make conversation were unsuccessful. Instead of working at conversational involvement, there was none. Even in a dyad, which is supposed to provide opportunities to participate, Hitoshi still seemed to be defined as a non-participant who could not speak English.

About two weeks later, we went on to a new unit and I paired Hitoshi with Myung Mi. I present two excerpts from their successful pair interaction which I think helped contribute to Hitoshi being redefined as a legitimate participant in the English classroom culture. I base this claim on my observation that Hitoshi's behavior changed dramatically from this point on in the semester in whatever grouping or activity I organized.

The first excerpt comes from the beginning of their interview and illustrates how Hitoshi and Myung Mi jointly negotiated their turn-taking, including what constituted a turn. I argue that Myung Mi's interactional work forced Hitoshi to take on the role of equal in their interaction, which provided him with his first opportunity to see himself as a legitimate participant in the classroom culture.

Excerpt 3 Hitoshi/Myung Mi Interview: Youth Culture

```
1     MYU: Hitoshi uh..do do most parents in your culture feel
2          that teenagers are difficult to control or get along with?
3          (PAUSE)
4  ---> HIT: yes... uh  yes   uh..
5  ---> MYU: yes   I think so
6  --->      your culture . uh Korean culture
7  --->      I think uh .. very similar?
8  ---> HIT: uhhuh
9  ---> MYU: yes?
10 ---> HIT: yes
11 ---> MYU: so?  (PAUSE)
12 ---> HIT: uh ...
13 --->      if parents and teenagers disagree
14           what might they disagree about
15    MYU: my parents...are very serious
16         and...uh....I  I know
17         my parents are very serious to me
18         uh.. when I.. when I was young..young age
19         my parents said to me
20         you..must..study..hard (changed voice)
21         so.. I don't like study
22         but..I don't like study
23         just eh um..my parents
24         you must study (changed voice)
25         you must study (changed voice)
26         but...but...
27         I'm  I'm I'm enjoyed with my friend
28 --->     yes
29 ---> HIT: yes ok (Pause)
30 --->      my?.. my experience?
31 --->      yes?
32 ---> MYU: yes
33 ---> HIT: I think almost teenagers don't don't like u..
34           agree with parents
35    MYU:                  yeah
36    HIT: but..my  my experience.. uh
37         sometime my father said
38         you don't have to.. study
39         alot of [uh
40    MYU:         [yes?
41    HIT: uh but
42         if he said uh
43         uh I want to study very hard ?
44    (BOTH LAUGH)
45         yeah
46 --->     sometime he said.. he said opposite
47 ---> MYU: opposite?
48 ---> HIT: opposite
49    MYU: yeah?
50    HIT: yeah (PAUSE)
51    MYU: Number 1?
52    HIT: uhhum
```

Q-MYU

A-HIT

Q-HIT

A-MYU

A-HIT

At the beginning of the interview, Hitoshi was taking on the same role–non-participant–with Myung Mi as he did with Ali Reza. Myung Mi began the interview by asking her question (lines 1 and 2). There was a relatively long pause. Hitoshi, in line 4, answered her question with a minimal response, "yes...uh yes uh.." After Hitoshi's pause in line 4, Myung Mi began to answer for Hitoshi in lines 5 through 7, "yes I think so your culture uh Korean culture I think uh.. very similar." Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (in Wertsch, 1985) is useful here in understanding the interactional work that Myung Mi did for Hitoshi. She took on the role of a more capable peer in the interaction and began to speak for him. Hitoshi ratified her contribution for him in line 8, "uhhuh."

Recall that in Hitoshi and Ali Reza's interview, first Hitoshi asked all of the questions and then Ali Reza asked all of the questions. In excerpt 3, Myung Mi asked Hitoshi two follow-up questions and paused–in line 9, "yes?" and line 11, "so?" Consistent with Hitoshi's participation in every interaction that I observed up to this interview, Hitoshi provided the minimal response, "yes," and "uhuh."

Myung Mi's interactional work, however, required more than this minimal response. In line 12, Hitoshi said, "uh..." and paused. Myung Mi demonstrated that it was Hitoshi's turn by not responding. Instead of elaborating on what Myung Mi had started, Hitoshi asked the first question from his interview. He saved face by taking his turn; he also avoided talking more in response to Myung Mi's question. As a result, he set up the floor distribution of their interview: first Myung Mi asks, then Hitoshi asks. This negotiation of turn taking is considerably different from the one-sidedness of Hitoshi and Ali Reza's interaction.

Several features of Hitoshi and Myung Mi's interaction contributed to Hitoshi's increased opportunity to participate. Myung Mi answered Hitoshi's question with a relatively long answer from her own experience. In line 28, Myung Mi signaled the end of her turn with her utterance, "yes." In line 29, Hitoshi ratified her answer with his utterance, "yes ok." Given the allocation of turns that had been set up, it should have been Myung Mi's turn to ask the next question. There was a pause. Myung Mi did not ask a question from her interview. This clearly signaled Hitoshi's turn. In line 30, he questioned, "my my experience?" Myung Mi did not respond verbally. Hitoshi in line 31 asked again if it was his turn to provide his experience with his utterance, "yes?" Myung Mi's utterance in line 32, "yes," indicated that this was correct. Myung Mi and Hitoshi negotiated their participant roles so that both were on equal footing and both of their experiences were to be provided to each question. They were to take turns. The dynamics between the participants, including the allocation of power, was completely

different than it was in the interview between Hitoshi and Ali Reza (where Ali Reza was in the more powerful position and Hitoshi continued in his role as non-participant).

Hitoshi and Myung Mi's interactional work also helped them to negotiate meaning with each other. They were highly involved in each others' utterances, which provided Hitoshi with his first experience of seeing himself as a legitimate speaker of English in the classroom culture. Lines 33 through 50 consist of Hitoshi's description of his Japanese experience in response to the question that he had asked Myung Mi. Myung Mi demonstrated her listenership, interest, and involvement in Hitoshi's response in line 35 as she overlapped, "yeah," in line 40, "yes," and in line 44 she and Hitoshi both laughed together. It is not clear whether this involvement contributed to their understanding of each other, but it seemed to help sustain the interaction.

In line 46 Hitoshi made the statement, "sometime he said opposite," which as we will see, required considerable interactional work for Myung Mi to understand. In line 47, Myung Mi uttered, "opposite?" Her repetition of Hitoshi's utterance with rising intonation functioned as a request. Hitoshi, in line 48, repeated what she had questioned, "opposite" with falling intonation. Perhaps he interpreted her question as a request to repeat the word because she had not understood the word "opposite". In line 49, Myung Mi again questioned, "yeah?" At this point in their interaction the source of Myung Mi's misunderstanding was not yet obvious to Hitoshi. He simply repeated, "yeah" and paused. With this utterance he signaled the end of his turn.

The next excerpt comes later in Hitoshi and Myung Mi's interview. It illustrates the amount of interactional work that Hitoshi and Myung Mi did to jointly create meaning so that Myung Mi could understand Hitoshi's utterance, "he said opposite."
In line 98 Hitoshi said with falling intonation, "my my experience" after Myung Mi answered one of his questions. His use of falling intonation rather than the rising intonation he used earlier, "my my experience?" (excerpt 3, line 30) suggests that he was comfortable with the format they had negotiated. Hitoshi responded with his experience in lines 98 through 172. This turn was significantly longer than any of his turns in the interview with Ali Reza. I attribute the difference to Hitoshi and Myung Mi's conversational involvement. The boldface highlights Myung Mi's supportive and involved role: in line 101, "ooooh," in line 103, "very good," line 105, "uhhum," line 108, "kay."

Excerpt 4: Hitoshi/ Myung Mi interview (Later)

98 → HIT: my.. my experience
99 HIT: if I I want to..I want to buy motorcycle or something?
100 HIT: uh he he say [ok..how many do do you need motorcycle
101 MYU: [oooooh
102 HIT: (LAUGH).. how many?.[100?
103 MYU: [very good
104 HIT: [200?
105 MYU: [uhhum..
106 HIT: when he he he said
107 HIT: uh I couldn't say anymore [(LAUGH)
108 MYU: [kay
109 HIT: uh everytime everytime?
110 MYU: yeah everytime?
111 HIT: I I said something I want to buy
112 I I want to do something
113 → He he said opp opposite
114 → MYU: opposite?
115 → HIT: opposite
116 MYU: okay? (little laugh)
117 HIT: (laugh) and I [couldn't
118 MYU: [you couldn't?
119 HIT: [couldn't
120 MYU: [yeah
121 HIT: whe when I I was high school student uh
122 I I start smoking
123 MYU: [uh huh..so you:ng
124 HIT: but he he said..it's ok
125 MYU: really?
126 HIT: ok
127 → MYU: I don't understand
128 HIT: it's ok but .. if you you want to [do...this way
129 MYU: [uhhum
130 HIT: you have to uh..you have to um
131 → what say um..I don't know (sigh)
132 → MYU: What's mean
133 → you must must
134 → you have to
135 → you must
136 HIT: yeah yeah
137 if uh for [for example
138 MYU: [yeah?
139 HIT: if I I drive
140 MYU: [yeah?
141 HIT: [car
142 MYU: [uhhum?
143 HIT: and uh I I...
144 → MYU: broken?
145 HIT: yeah broken
146 MYU: [yeah?
147 HIT: other car
148 MYU: another car
149 HIT: another car
150 I have to pay
151 MYU: yeah
152 HIT: for other uh
153 I have to [pay other person
154 MYU: [uhhum ok?
155 HIT: by myself
156 MYU: yes of course
157 HIT: same thing
158 → MYU: yes if you uh
159 → oooooooh
160 → HIT: uhhum
161 → MYU: [ooooh
162 → okaaaaaay
163 → I I understaaaaand
164 → I understand
165 → HIT: thank you (sigh)
166 → (BOTH LAUGH)
167 → and when he said to me
168 → you have to what call
169 → MYU: you have to yourself? uh yourself
170 → HIT: yeah yeah
171 MYU: [yes I I understand (LAUGH)
172 HIT: [yeah yeah

A-HIT

In lines 111 to 113, Hitoshi repeated the point of his story with his utterance "he said opposite,"

I I said something I want to buy
I I want to do something
He he said opp opposite

Again, in line 114, Myung Mi questioned, "opposite?" With lines 121 through 126, Hitoshi provided another example to illustrate what "he said opposite" meant. Hitoshi, in line 126, "ok," indicated that he had finished explaining. As we have seen, up to this point Myung Mi had been very involved in Hitoshi's talk. In line 127, she stated explicitly, "I don't understand." Given my interpretation that Hitoshi had perceived himself as unable to speak English with Ali Reza, Myung Mi's utterance was potentially very face threatening. But Hitoshi's response in the form of another example suggests that he did not interpret her utterance as anything but a request for further explanation. I believe that Hitoshi was willing to continue to try to make Myung Mi understand him because they had been so involved in each other's talk.

However, in line 131, Hitoshi said, "what say um.. I don't know (sigh)." At this point it looked like Hitoshi was frustrated by his inability to explain himself to Myung Mi and that he might give up. Myung Mi quickly jumped in, in lines 132-135, again taking on the role of a more capable peer and helping Hitoshi explain himself. Her rephrasing of Hitoshi's utterance in line 133 "you must must," did not provide new information for Hitoshi to build on, but she gave him some time to think and she demonstrated her interest in negotiating the meaning with him. By line 136, Hitoshi was ready to try another example. Myung Mi's contributions in lines 138, "yeah?" 140 "yeah?" 142, "uhhum?" showed support, and her rising intonation functioned as a request for Hitoshi to continue. In line 143, Hitoshi paused, "and uh I I..." Demonstrating her role in their joint construction of meaning, Myung Mi offered in line 144, "broken?" Hitoshi ratified her contribution and continued to build.

In line 158, "yes if you uh," Myung Mi was apparently still trying to put together the examples that Hitoshi provided to illustrate what he meant by, "he said opposite." Then her intonation changed drastically as she enthusiastically uttered in lines 161 through 164,

oooooh
okaaaaaay
I I understand
I understand

Hitoshi responded in line 165, "thank you," and sighed. Hitoshi continued to try to restate what he was saying,

> and when he said to me
> you have to what call

Myung Mi responded in line 168,

> you have to yourself?
> uh yourself

Myung Mi as the more capable peer helped Hitoshi tell her the point of his story, which Hitoshi ratified in line 170, "yeah yeah." It is not clear from the transcript exactly what Hitoshi had intended or exactly what Myung Mi had understood; however, they were clearly satisfied that they understood each other and from their perspective, they had successfully negotiated the meaning of Hitoshi's story. From there, they continued with the interview.

To summarize the dynamics of Hitoshi and Myung Mi's interview: Myung Mi's interactional work forced Hitoshi to take on the role of an equal participant. They each asked their questions and each provided their experience to both of their questions. They jointly constructed meaning and worked very hard to understand each other through the discourse strategies that each had adopted. Myung Mi's discourse strategies included allocating turns equally and defining appropriate responses, repeating, back channelling to show support, lengthening her pauses, contributing words or examples for Hitoshi to build on. Hitoshi's strategies included continuing to provide concrete examples of the abstract idea he was trying to convey and repeating the same point, "he said opposite" to clearly link the examples. In this way, Myung Mi could put the images together and come up with a unifying explanatory idea.

From that day on, I observed a significant change in the participant role Hitoshi assumed. Through his interaction with Myung Mi, Hitoshi had the opportunity to see himself as a legitimate speaker of English rather than as a non-participant whom no one else could understand. I believe that this interactional experience enabled Hitoshi to continue to be a legitimate speaker of English in the classroom culture. He and Myung Mi started talking on a regular basis, both in class and outside at lunch. This was the first time that I observed Hitoshi interacting with non-Japanese students on his own at school. I changed the groupings as the session continued because I like my students to know all of their classmates in small groups. Tapes of Hitoshi in other pairs illustrated his active participation–including a significant increase in quantity of talk.

The last day of class we were discussing cross-cultural differences in dating as a large group. Hitoshi made a voluntary contribution which started an argument among the Japanese students, who then monopolized the floor for the first time during the semester. Hitoshi had become a legitimate participant in the classroom culture.

Conclusion

My goal with this paper was to demonstrate a way that language teachers can use discourse analysis to investigate the dynamics within the small groups they organize and to understand how the interaction defines the students' participant roles relative to one another. This is important, given that unequal participant roles can limit one student's opportunities to negotiate meaning. Since negotiation of meaning is believed to be necessary for second language acquisition, one goal of a conversation class is often to maximize such opportunities. When the teacher identifies interaction that limits any of the students' opportunities to participate, the teacher can intervene. In addition, when strategies that some students are using to successfully negotiate meaning are identified, the teacher can help all of the students develop such strategies by making them explicit.[1]

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[1] A version of this paper was presented on the panel "Discourse Analysis in the ESL classroom" at TESOL 1992 in Vancouver, BC, March 7, 1992.

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